



ADRIATIC

Implementation of the ecosystem approach
in the Adriatic through marine spatial planning

Securing the future of the Adriatic's marine resources



The Adriatic Sea is at a crossroads. The region's marine resources and ecosystems are at risk, facing growing ecological threats and under increasing strain from all sectors of the blue economy. A coordinated approach – across borders and between industries, fishers, businesses, citizen users and governments – is required to ensure the most appropriate uses of the sea, reduce related pressures, and achieve Good Environmental Status for the whole of the Adriatic.

By taking an ecosystem approach to marine spatial planning (MSP), we can build a sustainable long-term future for the region – and that's where the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Adriatic project comes in.



MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Right now, important decisions must be made about how best to protect the Adriatic and ensure the continued presence of its natural resources. The GEF Adriatic project aims to support **maritime spatial planning (MSP)** across the region, for a sustainable future where socioeconomic development and environmental protection are in balance. It's the first initiative of its kind, embedding national **Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programmes (IMAPs)** into MSP frameworks to achieve **Good Environmental Status**.

However, MSP has only recently been developed in the Adriatic, and its key principles and elements are still evolving. To become successful, it must work at a scale that encompasses the entire Adriatic: the transboundary challenges we face require an **ecosystem approach**.

ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

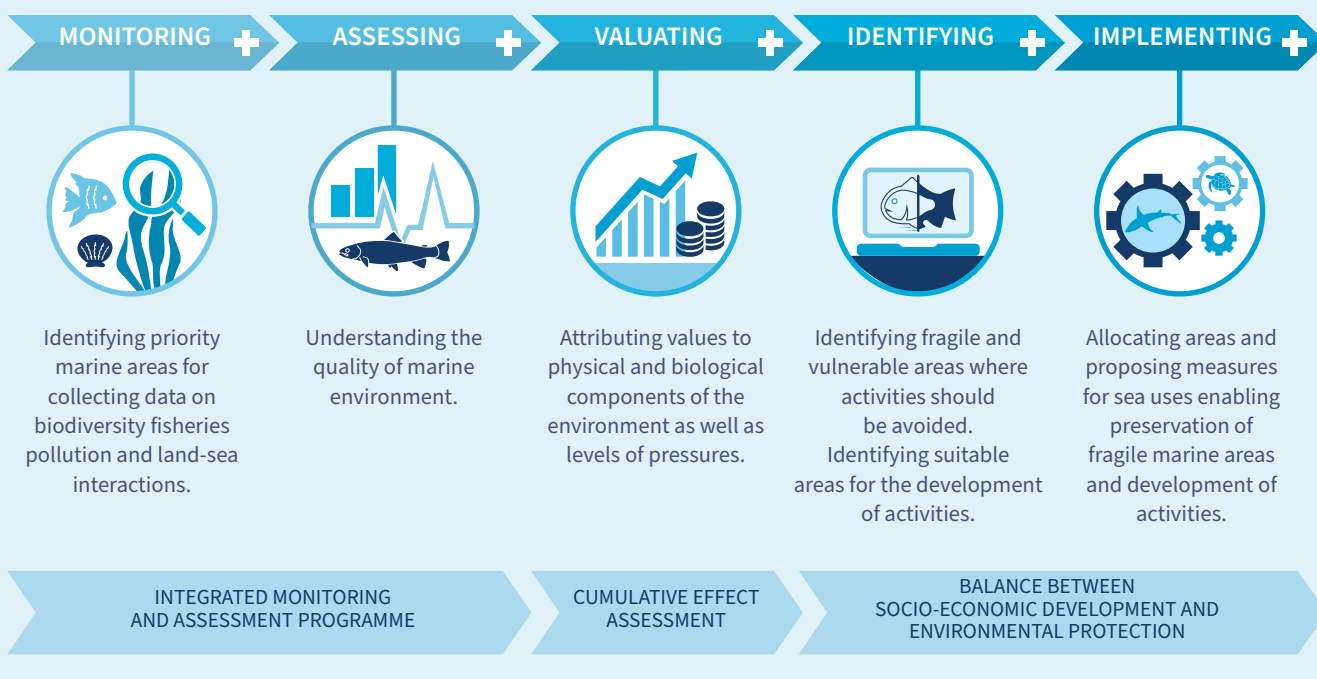
An **ecosystem approach** means taking an integrated, equitable and sustainable view of the land, water and living resources of the whole region. It goes beyond examining specific issues, species or ecosystem functions in isolation. Instead, it recognises ecological systems for what they are: rich mixes of elements in continuous interaction.

The **ecosystem approach** is particularly important for the management of coasts and seas, where the nature of water keeps systems and functions highly connected. Mainstreaming the **ecosystem approach** into the management of the Adriatic Sea means fully integrating

biodiversity, fisheries and marine pollution, as well as hydrographic processes and their interactions with the coast, into the strategies and decision-making which guide the growth of the blue economy.

The main aim of the GEF Adriatic project is to galvanise the adoption of an ecosystem approach in regional MSP. By providing a detailed understanding of the functions and interactions of the marine environment, assessing opportunities and measuring risks, the project is helping planners to manage the development of a sustainable blue economy while targeting Good Environmental Status.

GEF ADRIATIC: THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH IN MSP



KEY THREATS



Unsustainable tourism

Growing pressures from coastal and nautical tourism are diminishing natural values that attract tourism in the first place.



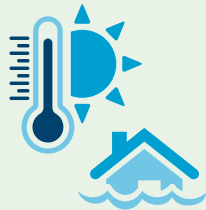
Overfishing

Unsustainable fish stock management puts future resources at risk.



Pollution

Untreated sewage and agricultural run-off are degrading water quality. Marine litter, found in increasing amounts on beaches and in the sea from the surface through the water column down to the seabed, is harming marine life.



Climate change

Warming waters favour invasive thermophile species, threaten local biodiversity and alter the main Mediterranean dense water formation source, and so affect the whole sea's oceanography. Sea level rise threatens coastal populations.

SUPPORTING REGIONAL DECISION-MAKERS

The GEF Adriatic project has identified both the most valuable and fragile marine zones in the Adriatic, surveying their capacity to support the further growth of key economic sectors including:

- Commercial fishing
- Nautical tourism (including anchoring)
- Aquaculture
- Marine traffic

The project has also identified the areas most heavily threatened by pollution, as well as areas which face the highest potential impacts of rising sea levels as the climate crisis unfolds. This information is vital for authorities, helping them plan both mitigation and adaptation actions.

Visions and strategies, legal and institutional frameworks, data collection and structuring, guidelines, methodologies – these all need to be developed, agreed and shared. The GEF Adriatic project is bringing people together – government, business, local communities, academia – to do so, working with civil society and decision-makers in the region as well as international organisations from inside and outside the EU.

So far, the GEF Adriatic project has focused on Albania and Montenegro, but lessons learned from the project will be widely applicable around the Mediterranean.

THE ADRIATIC SEA IN NUMBERS

SURFACE AREA:
138,600KM²
VOLUME:
35,000KM³

5%
OF MEDITERRANEAN
SEA AREA

7,000+
SPECIES OF
FLORA AND
FAUNA, WITH HIGH
ENDEMISM RATE

49%
OF ALL
MEDITERRANEAN
SPECIES

**10
MILLION**
PEOPLE LIVING
ON COASTLINE



PROJECT INFORMATION

- **FULL NAME:** Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach in the Adriatic Sea through Marine Spatial Planning
- **TIMEFRAME:** May 2018 to December 2020
- **VALUE:** US\$13,835,690 (GEF grant US\$1,817,900)
- **FUNDED BY:** GEF grant, with contributions from participating countries and executing agencies
- **EXECUTING AGENCIES:** UNEP/MAP in partnership with PAP-RAC and SPA-RAC
- **NATIONAL BENEFICIARIES:**
 - Albania** – Ministry of Tourism and Environment, National Agency for Protected Areas
 - Montenegro** – Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism

“

This is an ambitious, complex project which is already demonstrating how the ecosystem approach can be applied to MSP. Thanks to the collaboration of Montenegrin and Albanian authorities and their willingness to jointly test innovative and integrated approaches towards managing marine resources, it offers great potential for wider replication across the Mediterranean.”

Lorenzo Paolo Galbiati
UNEP/MAP, project manager

“

Our marine environment is one of our most important national resources, but we need to take a lot more action to preserve it. The GEF project gives us an unmissable opportunity to start managing the Adriatic in the integrated way such an aim requires. We hope that the experience and data the project generates – particularly through ongoing marine surveys along with marine monitoring– will provide a firm foundation for future MSP in Albania and beyond.”

Zamir Dedej
National Agency for Protected Areas, Albania

“

The GEF Adriatic project will make a major contribution to our conservation obligations under the Barcelona Convention and to fulfilling our EU candidate requirements. By significantly increasing our national capacities for assessing, monitoring and managing marine resources, it allows Montenegro to begin its first ever large-scale MSP processes.”

Ivana Stojanović,
Ministry of sustainable development and tourism, Montenegro

MORE INFORMATION

The GEF Adriatic project is built on collaboration, and the project coordinators are keen to increase its momentum: we're working with diverse stakeholders to draft future policies, mobilise funding opportunities, launch new initiatives and share best practices. Whatever your role and responsibility, if you're involved with marine resource management in the Adriatic, we want to hear from you.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is focused on bringing area-based management into the mainstream, helping regional bodies choose and implement the most effective policies to reach the global target of conserving 10% of the world's marine areas.

CONTACT

Ivana Stojanović, Montenegro
E: ivana.stojanovic@mrt.gov.me
Zamir Dedej, Albania
E: zamir.dedej@akzm.gov.al